

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MONTRE 00372 221358Z

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15

/072 W

-----116186 222029Z /50

R 212205Z FEB 78

FM AMCONSUL MONTREAL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 076

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMCONSUL QUEBEC

UNCLAS MONTREAL 0372

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJECT: CRACKS WIDENING IN UNION NATIONALE

1. BILL SHAW, MNA FROM POINTE CLAIRE RIDING, RESIGNED FROM THE UNION NATIONALE ON SUNDAY (FEB. 19) AND WILL SIT IN THE ASSEMBLY AS AN INDEPENDENT, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY. HIS MOVE FOLLOWED THE RESIGNATION OF THE FIVE-MEMBER EXECUTIVE OF HIS RIDING ASSOCIATION LAST WEEK AFTER A MEETING WITH PARTY LEADER, RODRIGUE BIRON, AT WHICH THE LATTER HAD REFUSED TO SUPPORT FEDERALISM "AT ANY COST."

2. QUESTION WHETHER HE IS A FEDERALIST PROBABLY PROMPTED BY BIRON STATEMENT SOME TIME AGO THAT HE COULD NOT COMMIT HIMSELF TO VOTE AGAINST THE REFERENDUM UNTIL HE HAD SEEN THE QUESTION. REPLY ON THIS OCCASION REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN "I'M A NATIONALIST BUT NOT A SEPARATIST" WHICH WAS NOT SUFFICIENTLY STRONG FOR CONVINCED ANGLOPHONE FEDERALISTS.

3. SHAW WAS ONLY ANGLOPHONE AMONG UNION NATIONALE RANKS, ALTHOUGH PARTY RACKED UP SIZEABLE NUMBER OF VOTES FROM DISENCHANGED LIBERALS IN OTHER WEST END MONTREAL RIDINGS IN 1976 ELECTIONS. WE KNOW A NUMBER OF OTHERS WHO HAVE SINCE LOST THEIR FAITH IN BIRON AND THE UN IN THE INTERIM. ALTHOUGH SHAW CONSIDERED "AN EXTREMIST"

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PAGE 02 MONTRE 00372 221358Z

EVEN BY MANY ANGLOPHONES, THIS MAY CAUSE THE FINAL RUPTURE BETWEEN THAT CONSTITUENCY AND THE PARTY.

4. ACCORDING ONE WILL PLACED (AND STILL FAITHFUL BUT CONCERNED) PARTY MEMBER, THIS COULD ALSO LEAD TO A FEW DEFECTIONS FROM THE FRANCLPHONE WING OF THE UNION NATIONALE, WHICH NOW REDUCED TO TEN SEATS.

HARPER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY, PARTY SCHISMS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MONTRE00372
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780082-0743
Format: TEL
From: MONTREAL
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780233/aaaabboq.tel
Line Count: 63
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 8ffd60d3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3536924
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CRACKS WIDENING IN UNION NATIONALE
TAGS: PINT, CA, UNION NATIONALE
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/8ffd60d3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014